

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

An automated freezer stores food items stacked in a removable cartridge. The food items are dispensed from the automated freezer in response to a request for the food items. The food items are loaded into the cartridge outside of the automated freezer. When the cartridge is inserted into the automated freezer, the upper end of the cartridge is inserted into a buffer, pushing a plurality of arms in the buffer upwardly to allow food items to pass through the buffer. When the cartridge is removed from the freezer for reloading of food items, a resilient member biases the arms downwardly to retain any food items in the buffer and to prevent any food items in the buffer from falling.

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